

Air Quality

San Diego enjoys some of the most beautiful weather in the United States. However, smog levels influence the quality of air and, in turn, can negatively affect a person's health leading to reduced lung capacity, respiratory problems, and complication of existing medical conditions. Ground-level ozone is San Diego County's primary pollution problem. Ozone (the primary ingredient of smog) is particularly harmful for children, elderly persons, and those with weakened immune systems or those suffering from asthma, chronic lung and heart disease.

For the first time in 40 years of monitoring ozone, San Diego County did not exceed the federal one-hour ozone standard for even one day during 1999¹⁵. This compares to 70 days in 1970 when ozone was higher than the federal one-hour standards. The state has stricter ozone standards, and there were 43 days in 1999 that San Diego Air Basin exceeded these. This was a 50% decrease since 1998 and an overall decrease of 66% since 1987. These improvements have been attributed to local, state and federal emission reduction programs.

In addition, San Diego County met federal air quality standards for the other criteria pollutants such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, inhalable particulates, and lead. Continued improvements in our air quality problem can be achieved in part by reducing our personal contributions to the air quality problem, such as automobile emissions.



Beach Water Quality

San Diego County has 38 beaches along 154 miles of coastline. In 1999, water samples were collected from 110 locations, including many jurisdictional boundaries of cities, federal facilities, state parks and county lands. Beach water quality is tested under requirements of the California Health and Safety Code. In 1999, California's recreational water quality monitoring was increased to include weekly sampling from April through October, due to implementation of the Beach Safety Bill (AB411). Bacterial indicators monitored are total coliform, fecal coliform and enterococcus bacteria. These bacteria are indicators of other pathogens that may be present and cause illness to bathers.

When the standards are exceeded, such as after a sewage spill, warning signs are posted to let the public know. The signs will state that the bacteria levels exceeded the state standards and to avoid water contact. The source of contamination is not always known and may be due to animal waste, decaying plant material or another source. Whenever signs are posted, bathers should avoid swimming and should stay out of the water.

In 1999, 1,405 beach postings and closures occurred¹⁶. Of those, 845 were due to a single standard exceeding the state levels; 130 closures were due to known sewage spills. Some beaches may have an occasional incident with a high bacteria result. A beach may be posted for as little as 48 hours. If samples continue with high test results, the beach may be posted for longer periods until samples confirm that the water is safe for recreational use. If a source of contamination can be identified, it is usually controlled or eliminated.

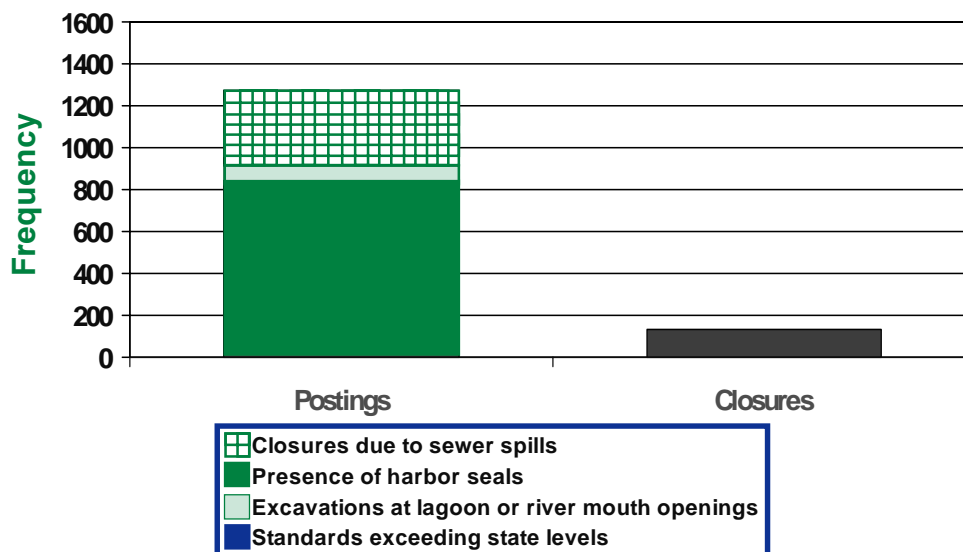
Poison Control

Toxic substances are part of the environment we live, work and play in. These substances may include chemicals, cleaners, medications, houseplants, bad food, pesticides or fertilizers. During 1999, the Poison Control Center of San Diego County handled 24,075 poison calls for human exposure¹⁷. Approximately 94% of the human exposures occurred at home and the majority (78%) of these were managed at non-health care facilities, resulting in significant savings in healthcare costs. Over half of the emergency hotline calls to the Poison Control Center involved children 5 years and younger. The most common exposures among children were household cleaners and cosmetics. The most common exposure among adults was bites and envenomations (spider and snake bites).

The Poison Control Center staff is made up of specially trained clinical pharmacists, nurses and poison information providers. They are staffed 24 hours a day and seven days a week. The Poison Control Hotline is (800) 876-4766.

Health and Human Services Agency

Reasons for Beach Postings and Closures San Diego County, 1999



Note: "Posting" indicates a sign informing the public that swimming or contact with the affected water is not advisable.
"Closure" indicates that the area has been closed to the public to prevent swimming or contact with the affected water

10 Most Common Exposures for Poison Control Calls in San Diego County, 1999

Top 10 Exposures for Adults

Reason for Call	Number	%
1. Bites and Envenomations	1,320	12.3
2. Analgesic Medication	966	9.0
3. Cleaning Agents	869	8.1
4. Sedative-Hypnotic Medications	762	7.1
5. Food Poisoning	867	6.4
6. Antidepressant Medications	547	5.1
7. Insecticides/Pesticides	397	3.7
8. Alcohols	386	3.6
9. Miscellaneous Chemicals	365	3.4
10. Hydrocarbons	311	2.9

Top 10 Exposures for Children

Reason for Call	Number	%
1. Household cleaners	1,135	11.0
2. Cosmetics	1,134	11.0
3. Plants	794	7.7
4. Analgesic Medication	783	7.6
5. Cough and Cold Medicine	639	6.2
6. Foreign Bodies	577	5.6
7. Topical/Dermatological Medications	536	5.2
8. Antimicrobial medication	402	3.9
9. Vitamins	340	3.3
10. Gastrointestinal Medications	320	3.1